GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
TOURISM
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3514
ANSWERED ON:26.04.2007
BUDDHIST CIRCUITS IN INDIA
Vallabbhaneni Shri Balashowry

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of the study conducted by FICCI-ICRA stating that tourist arrivals to Buddhist circuits in India can be boosted by 400 per cent;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action proposed to be taken by the Government to exploit this potential?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE: (SMT. AMBIKA SONI)

(a): Yes, Sir.

(b): FICCI had commissioned a study on "Positioning India as a Hub for Buddhist Tourism" and its report was released on 25th January, 2007. According to this report, three distinct circuits of Buddhist tourism in India can be identified and promoted, which can aim to attract 0.25% (from the current level of 0.06%) of the world's Buddhist population by 2012, which is equivalent to about one million tourists, and this is a rise of 400% from the current annual base of about 200,000. The report also states that this would require marketing efforts, better connectivity as well as improvement of on-ground conditions in terms of better infrastructure and creation of other enabling issues like security, visa, permit conditions, etc.

(c): Infrastructure upgradation of Buddhist circuits has been taken in a big way through identification of 22 important Buddhist sites throughout the country. Government of India has sanctioned 14 projects amounting to Rs. 57.22 crore for development of tourism infrastructure in 12 sites across different states. The infrastructure development has also been taken up through Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for Ajanta-Ellora amounting to Rs. 299 crore. Government has also entered into an agreement for undertaking infrastructure development at Buddhist sites of Sarnath, Kushinagar, Kapilvastu, Shravasti and Sankisa in Uttar Pradesh with JBIC for a loan assistance of Rs. 395.63 crore for total project of Rs. 680 crore.

A major campaign titled "Come to India-Walk with the Buddha" was launched in the South East Asian market and in Domestic market for promotion of Buddhist circuit. In addition, Buddhism has also been identified for tourism development in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal & Sri Lanka through a common promotional campaign.

The Ministry of Tourism has requested Ministries of Civil Aviation, Railways and Road Transport & Highways to take steps for improving connectivity to important tourist destinations in the country, including the Buddhist sites. The issues related to visa-on-arrival, electronic visa, advanced passenger system and permits have been taken up with the Ministry of Home Affairs.